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**Native Agents**  
**and**  
**Their Training.**



# NATIVE AGENTS AND THEIR TRAINING.

## A PAPER

READ AT THE FIFTH GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ALLIANCE  
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BY

REV. JAMES S. DENNIS, D.D.

Beirut, Syria.

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## NATIVE AGENTS AND THEIR TRAIN- ING.

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OUR success in missions depends largely upon a wise choice of ways and means. Not only is this true in the ordinary acceptation of the term, but in a very special and vital sense it is a matter of Divine ways and means. In order to the highest success we must coincide in our methods and plans with what God's wisdom approves and His providence indicates.

Missionary methods, then, are a subject of high and sacred study, calling for prayerful humility of mind, spiritual insight, patient tact, careful observation, large charity, generous sympathy with the spirit and environment of the native mind, comprehensive grasp of existing religious conditions, sober common sense, enlightened judgment and practical experience. The ordinary problem of adjusting the method to the requirements of a great enterprise loses none of its seriousness and delicacy, but rather grows more intricate, when we find ourselves dealing with the religious nature, and seeking the spiritual development along Gospel

lines, of a people who have been outside the realm of biblical training and influence. Our problem is to adjust the Gospel to strange and alien social conditions, to obtain for it an entrance, to secure for it a prestige, and to establish it in self-propagating organizations, by means of methods and agencies which may be easily misinterpreted and made to minister to a spirit which is opposed to the whole idea of self-sacrificing independence in the native churches. After working for years upon a basis of foreign benevolence with the apparent purpose of inaugurating an era of pure philanthropy, we have to seek by sheer moral force and the power of spiritual appeal to lift the native church to the often unwelcome and revolutionary conception of making costly sacrifices for the perpetuation of that which they have always received largely as a free gift, and unfortunately in some instances have come to consider as a right guaranteed to them permanently by the unfailing generosity of foreign philanthropy. A man who has always had the privileges of a free pass considers it a veritable self-immolation of both his spirit and his pocket to pay his way ; especially if he thinks that he is still morally and in proper courtesy entitled to

his free ride. The appeal to his self-respect falls flat, for he has had no conscious loss of self-respect during all these years that he has been riding gratuitously. The implied need of moral toning up, and the supposed importance to him of individual training in sacrifice and public spirit, and the duty, vaguely apprehended by him, of a higher appreciation on his part of the privileges he enjoys, and the prospect of prestige and benefit to the common welfare, and the need of the funds which his free rides represent, for repairs and improvements and general extension of the business in other directions, all seem to him considerations which may be easily passed over and allowed to lapse. If they are pressed and insisted upon with vigor and persistency, incredulity often gives place to irritation ; and there is a disposition to magnify the matter into an individual grievance and regard it as an excuse for the neglect of common interests and public duty.

I have not brought forward this illustration as giving a fair or even approximate representation of the actual state of things in all the foreign fields ; but only as throwing a strong light upon a tendency which more or less unconsciously exists in the na-

tive mind, where questions of independence and the substitution of a native agency drawing support from the people are urged upon the consideration of native communities. There are some exceptional cases, notably the Japanese, where this illustration would apply only in a modified sense ; but it may be said fairly to represent an ill-concealed tendency in many fields. The illustration will serve its purpose if it suggests to the minds of Christians at home a conception of the average difficulties of creating a public sentiment in native communities in favor of local support to mission churches in foreign fields where the native converts are usually feeble, poor, and helpless, without influence, prestige, and authority, and with as yet few God-called and God-inspired native leaders. I do not desire to excuse or palliate the facts or disguise the existence of a spirit, more or less mercenary, which influences to a discouraging extent the minds of native converts. I wish the Church to know these difficulties, not that they may be disheartened thereby, but that they may appreciate the progress which is being made in the matter of native aid and local benevolence, and give due credit to the touching and genuine spirit of sacrifice often



displayed by native brethren. I hope also that it may lead all to regard with patience and forbearance the slow progress of the native church in many fields toward its own independent support.

There is another point I would like to enforce by the considerations which have been presented, and that is the need of extreme caution lest we should unduly multiply the number of foreign agents in any single field or mission, and so make the development of native agency more difficult and its advocacy seem less reasonable to the native churches. We need a certain wholesome dearth, or at least not an over-supply of the foreign missionary element in long-established missions, that the call for native agents and the pressure upon the native conscience to supply them may be the more pronounced. Where new work is to be undertaken and new fields occupied, there is a manifest call for the foreign missionary ; and it is in this extension of the area of mission effort that he finds a field for his energy, courage, and pluck. With his sustaining faith, his clear convictions of duty, his broad view of his mission, his patience, consecration and assured support, he goes in the spirit and power of an accredited am-

bassador of Christ. His work will need all his enthusiasm, his persistency, his devotion, his wise counsel, his guiding hand for long years, and it may be for two or three generations ; but in the mean time his duty is as plain as it is solemn and important, and it should impel him to work steadily and conscientiously toward the proper training and the full intellectual and spiritual equipment of a native agency which will in time come forward to assume the duties of evangelistic and teaching service, and so relieve the pressure for an undue multiplication of foreign laborers to overtake the work.

A grave question of expediency and wise economy of administration is at once suggested by the subject before us. It is the proper regulation of the proportion of foreign and native agency in any given field of mission enterprise. It is a matter to be decided largely with reference to the conditions of the problem in each separate field. Great weight should be given, of course, to the judgment of missionaries on the field, yet there is a call for careful scrutiny and independent judgment on the part of those who, as officers and administrators of the gifts of the Church, stand between the mis-

sions and the churches as the representatives of the interests of both. The training of native agents is often attended with many discouragements. They frequently seem to fail at the most critical moments, and under circumstances of peculiar aggravation. They will sometimes demand an unreasonable and disproportionate increase of salary, and if denied, they will desert their post of service for some more lucrative worldly employment after the mission has been at a large outlay to prepare them for their position. Their work is sometimes slovenly and done in the spirit of a hireling. The moral dignity and spiritual force of their personality seem, in some cases, to be in a state of chronic collapse. They fail often to respond to the higher motives of service, and seem willing to let their work drag on with no enthusiasm and little zeal. Their labor appears to be barren in results, with little to give promise of better things. Under such discouraging circumstances the heart of the missionary grows despondent, and turning away from his native help with feelings of distrust and despair, he looks longingly toward the Church at home, and prays for a brother missionary of his own race and blood who will bring aid and cheer

and sympathy, and give a manly and heroic tone to the loved service of the Master. His call is loud and full of moral earnestness and heart pathos. It should be responded to promptly and sympathetically in probably the majority of cases, yet cautiously and always with discriminating inquiry as to the exact status of the problem of native agency, and the actual relative proportion of foreign to native forces in the field. In most cases it may be an absolute necessity to send foreign missionaries; in others it may result in an over-supply of the foreign element, and prove a hindrance to the employment of native agents, who should be brought forward and made to bear responsibility and assume burdens which no one as yet has had the courage to place upon them.

An indiscriminate urgency for the multiplication of foreign missionaries throughout the world needs to be tempered and directed by a proper regard for the imperative call in most mission fields for native workers, and the undoubted propriety and advantage of committing the work of missions in foreign lands as rapidly as possible to the hands of native converts chosen and called of God to serve in His kingdom. If we take a sober view of the present and prospective

resources of foreign missions, and pass a fair judgment as to the relative desirability of foreign and native laborers in the pastoral service of mission churches, and in the every-day personal contact with native communities, we are constrained to deprecate any such undue or disproportionate multiplication of foreign agents as shall render impossible an enlarged and vigorous policy in the direction of a more efficient native agency.

We do not mean that thousands of foreign missionaries are not needed. The call of need from the foreign fields, with their vast populations and open doors, is the most impressive and startling voice of Providence to the Church in this century. This is not so much a question of need as of policy and wisdom in administration. Granted the need, how can we best meet it? Shall we endeavor to organize a stampede of American, British, and European missionaries to all parts of the heathen world? We question the wisdom of this plan. It would involve a very costly outlay in money and lives. It would be defective in organization and imply much ill directed and futile toil. It would react in discouragement on the churches at home as the signs of failure and

mistaken zeal multiply, and it would fail to produce permanent and self-developing results. At the present moment it is not so much zeal in indiscriminate sowing of the seed broadcast over the world by foreign agents which is needed, as it is the steady and diligent efforts to nourish and cultivate and harvest seed already sown, and from this native fruitage to obtain the seed, and also prepare the soil, and raise up the native laborers to further cultivate the arts of spiritual husbandry, and give the cheering promise of a natural increase of ten, twenty, fifty, and a hundredfold to the Lord's harvest fields. An excess of foreign laborers to occupy positions which native agents could fill, and perform services which could safely and advantageously be committed to native hands, is a policy which in the end will surely react to the injury of missions. It is costly and absorbs funds which might be used to serve for a larger ministry in the employment of natives ; it retards the progress of the native element toward the assumption of the higher functions of Christian service ; it is apt to injure the feelings and excite the jealousy of worthy and efficient helpers, who feel that a larger scope should be given them in the honors and re-

sponsibilities of the Lord's work ; it has a tendency to unduly coddle and over-serve with gratuitous foreign ministrations the native church, and in some cases to make unacceptable the humbler and less highly educated services of the native ministry.

In view of these considerations I desire to offer, at the present stage of our foreign missionary enterprise, an earnest plea for an advance in the policy of more systematic training and more general employment of native agents. I am well aware of the difficulties and discouragements which will face us in this course of action. I would have the advance conducted with caution and judgment and discriminating care. I know there are multitudes of natives in every field clamoring for employment who are utterly unworthy of a place in the Lord's vineyard. I know that there are some of those who are already employed who could be dismissed with little or no loss to the Church. I know that neither these natives nor their friends would coincide with this judgment, and that some low motive of selfishness, or favoritism, or personal feeling, or unfair discrimination is usually attributed to the missionary as exerting an undue influence over him. I am well aware of the instabil-

ity, restlessness, worldliness, and mercenary spirit of some of the native helpers who have become identified with mission work in different fields, and that there is only one thing worse than a mercenary native agent, and that is a mercenary foreign missionary. Yet this is not a state of things which should lead us to lose faith in native agents. Mission work has necessarily appealed to the mercenary spirit where it existed. It offers regular and very honorable employment with fair wages to all who can secure places. Applicants have multiplied who were entirely unfit for service, and who were not capable of even passing an intelligent judgment upon the higher and more spiritual qualifications necessary in a candidate. The result is that there is usually in every field a circle of discontented and unhappy candidates who are bitterly disappointed that they are not employed, and regard themselves as unjustly treated. This is inevitable, and if in some cases mistakes have been made, and men who were not called and furnished by God have been put into places of responsibility by the missionary, it is due to that lack of perfect discernment which is ever incident to the exercise of fallible human judgment.



There is, however, a brighter side to all this. Native agency has had a most honorable history in the modern missionary enterprise, and deserves a large and generous share of the credit of its success. There are native helpers who are chosen and called of God, and furnished by Him with gifts of heart and mind to do noble service in the Church. There are men and women whose hearts have been made humble and tender and consecrated, and who serve in the spirit of love, with zeal and enthusiasm. Their aspirations are high, their service loyal, their motives pure, their self-denial marked, their success indisputable. They love the Master, study and honor His Word, rejoice in His service, seek the spiritual welfare of souls, and long and pray for the coming of His kingdom in the power and glory of its triumph. They live in natural and hearty contact with the people; they are in sympathetic and helpful touch with fellow-natives; they command the love and respect of their constituency, and are truly prophets and guides among God's people. Many of them are gifted and mighty in prayer, and preach the Gospel of life with tender unction and spiritual power. They have a blessed ministry as peacemakers and

comforters and kindly counsellors in the native circles where they live. Many of them do the work of an evangelist with conspicuous success, and teach the way of life with singular clearness, impressiveness, and persuasiveness. Every missionary can name such persons in his field. He honors and trusts them, and prays that others may be raised up like them. They seem to represent the spirit and power of the Gospel, and to adapt the lessons and apply the instructions of the Divine Word to the daily life of native families in an Asiatic village, without any unnatural wrenching of the immemorial customs of society or needless clashing with native susceptibilities. There is a certain native simplicity, tact, good sense, and homely naturalness in the way in which they state and enforce the teachings of the Bible which it is all but impossible for a foreigner to imitate, unless he is thoroughly at home in the use of the vernacular and has spent many years in close contact with the native mind. Our foreign missions at the present time, almost without exception, are in desperate need of just such men as I have described. Perhaps the most pressing problem of the hour in mission fields is the problem of men—men from the ranks

and to the ranks, with God's own seal upon them, and the indwelling Spirit inspiring them with a message, and working through them to quicken and enlarge the native church. Every earnest missionary the world over is yearning and praying for such helpers, and would consider them the crowning blessing of God to the native churches. They could do the work of the human agent in God's plan of co-operation for the up-building of the kingdom so easily, so thoroughly, so effectively. Burdens which a foreign missionary seems hardly able to grasp, or which he must handle awkwardly and at arms' length, if at all, they can shoulder with easy grace and carry with a firm tread and an onward swing which indicates a consciousness of mastery where the missionary could only lament his seeming helplessness.

Men prominent in mission service who have the right to speak with the authority which supreme devotion and large experience give, have put themselves on record as fully convinced of the value and necessity of trained native agents as permanent factors in a true mission policy.

Mackay, of Uganda, regarded the African himself as the most effective instrument for

Christianizing Africa, and urged the establishment of centres where he could be properly trained by missionary teachers.

Bishop Thoburn, of India, says that we "find it best in every way to select pastors who represent the average grade of the people, and who live among them and will continue to be of them. We have noticed during recent years that most of our converts are persons who are gathered in by preachers of their own rank."

Rev. John Ross, of Manchuria, stated in the recent Conference at Shanghai, that since he took up his residence as a missionary in that field "twelve hundred people have been baptized into the Christian Church." He remarked further: "I wish, however, to mention this fact, only in order to state that the first principles of Christian instruction were implanted almost invariably by the natives. I do not think I can trace more than four and twenty who were directly the converts of the foreign missionaries." And with reference to the employment of native agents, he said: "And I consider it far the wisest, the most effective, and the cheapest plan to provide the means for supporting these men to enable them to give their undivided time,

thought, and labor to this work, just as we are ourselves supported by the Church for the same purpose. It appears to me that the training of native evangelists is one of the most important questions before the Conference. I am convinced that China is to be converted by the Chinese. In order that they should be efficient agents they must be thoroughly well trained, not only in Christian, but in other knowledge. Paul was, no doubt, a more efficient agent by reason of the education he had received prior to his conversion. The time has come when we should make an appeal to the home churches, not merely for more missionaries and lay agents, but for a few of the most talented and earnest and conspicuous men in the home churches, who would be like Sauls over us all and would undertake this most important work of thoroughly training native evangelists."

Dr. Hunter Corbett, of Chefoo, strongly urges the more extensive use of native evangelists, for whose special training he has organized a normal school at Chefoo. It was advocated at the recent Missionary Conference at Shanghai in 1890 that five hundred native evangelists would be a far greater power in China than five thousand foreigners.

At the recent Missionary Conference in London in 1888, strong papers were presented by missionaries from the field urging the importance of native agency.

Rev. Robert Stephenson, of Madras, said :  
 “ It is an axiom of missionary policy, which has been stated more than once during the Conference, that the evangelization of a great heathen land like India must be accomplished mainly through the agency of her own sons.”

Rev. John Hewlett, of Benares, said :  
 “ The history of missions strikingly proves to us how inadequate for the Christian conquest of the yet vast heathen countries of the world is the number of foreign missionaries which the Church can hope to bring into the field ; with what success the Holy Ghost has already crowned our prayerful endeavor to enlist native converts into the great missionary army ; and what powerful appeals are presented to us by ever-multiplying opportunities, as by so many summonses from our Saviour King, to enlarge the forces of our native Christian workers.”

At the Shanghai Conference in 1890, Rev. Dr. J. L. Nevius said : “ Among the most important of the subjects we are now to consider is that which relates to the use

of native agents. The first converts are, of course, brought into the Church by the foreign missionary. Afterward the work of aggressive evangelization must be mainly through the native Christians. The millions of China must be brought to Christ by Chinamen. Hence it is the duty of foreign missionaries to make the most of native agency."

The testimonies that we have from the mission fields of the efficiency of the native arm of the service are most gratifying and significant. The past year in the Shantung Province in China has witnessed the largest ingathering of souls in the history of our Presbyterian Mission, and the result has been secured chiefly through the labors of five earnest, faithful, devoted native brethren. Substantially the same testimony might be given with reference to the success of the Karen Mission in Burma, and the Telugu Mission in India, and the work of the London Missionary Society in Madagascar and the South Sea Islands.

Rev. Dr. Murdock, Honorary Secretary of the American Baptist Missionary Union, says in a recent paper from his pen, read at the annual meeting of the Union in May, 1892: "As a practical working method we

must accept the native agency, not only as ordained of God, but as justified by all missionary experience. Our missionaries must be pioneers, must make beginnings, and then commit the message to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others in their turn. Our chief missionary success has been by the many native messengers who have run to and fro, up and down their own lands, imparting the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ."

There is no difference of opinion among missionaries of experience as to the usefulness of native agents of the right kind up to a certain point. A divergence of opinion becomes apparent with reference to the extent to which they should be used. Some would draw the line very sharply and narrowly, limiting strictly the proportion of native helpers, while ready to extend indefinitely the number of foreign agents; others would deprecate earnestly the disproportionate increase of foreign missionaries, and would rather bring forward and use more largely the native arm of the service, as more economical, efficient, and useful, and giving promise of larger and more permanent results. There is much to commend the latter policy, provided there is



careful and thorough provision made for the proper training of candidates for mission service, and sufficient proper oversight of their subsequent work. It has in it an element of wise economy, is in the line of natural development of mission enterprise, gives scope for indefinite expansion, enlists the sympathy and kindles the ambition of native Christians, stimulates the spirit of independence among them, brings the Gospel into less official and more continuous touch with native lives, and gives promise of increasing harvests of spiritual results.

The contributions of the churches to the boards or societies having the direction of the foreign work are insufficient to supply the increasing demands of the fields. Severe and disastrous retrenchment has been required of almost all our missions for years. The opportunities for advance, and the urgent appeals of the expanding work among the native communities, have been far beyond the official estimate sent home by our missionaries. The missions knew that these carefully matured and already economized estimates would be subjected to a further shrinkage before the expenditure would be authorized by the boards at home. This reduction, out of a sense of

justice and fairness, is not exacted of the missionaries themselves, who are in distant lands, with no expectation of any income other than that given them by the board, whose salaries have been pledged to them by honorable contract, and graduated upon a scale which is intended to provide only for the necessary expenses of economical living. It must, therefore, fall upon the native agencies and limit the number employed and the outlay made in that department. Whatever the missionary does in the reduction of his own income is left to be a voluntary act on his part, and noble sacrifices in a spirit of true self-denial are often made by those who have already sacrificed much; and so the funds which are denied to the work are sometimes in part supplied by a quiet and unnoticed act of self-denial, as some faithful missionary resigns what the Church has given him to supply what she has withheld from his work. In view of these facts, it will be seen that the contributions of the churches to foreign missions will not permit of an indefinite increase in the number of foreign agents without ruinous economy in the native arm of the service. A few more foreign missionaries in some of our fields would

wipe out the entire native plant. Instead of expanding horizontally and along the lines of closest contact with the people, the mission would exhaust itself in the effort at perpendicular growth, until it was in danger of collapsing by its own top-heaviness. Our mission boards and committees would be like some national government which had exhausted its resources in providing an army of major-generals and had left the ranks unsupplied with the less conspicuous but no less efficient under-officers of the service. If the Church will authorize and provide the outlay which is required to put both arms of the service in a state of thorough efficiency, then the advances of the foreign mission army will bewith firm, swift tread and sustained success.

Our true policy, therefore, in view of the present and prospective limitations in the financial support of the foreign mission work, is to expand slowly and cautiously in the supply of foreign missionaries in our older mission fields, and turn our attention rather to the development of native agencies. We should make arrangements for thorough and systematic training of native helpers, and give ourselves with energy, perseverance, and enthusiasm to the task of

inspiring and guiding and helping natives into the higher and nobler walks of Christian service. This can be done, and if our mission work is to become a healthy plant of the soil it must be done. It may seem to involve a certain loss of *morale* in the service and a temporary lowering of standards, and a deterioration in the spiritual quality of the work done, while the native agents may be less able to resist powerful opposition and more exposed to persecution ; yet its advantages will far outbalance its disadvantages, and the missionary himself can to a large extent remedy these defects, if they exist, by proper oversight of the work done, and by his inspiring personal influence over his native assistants. It will be an immense gain to have the Gospel mirrored in the character of the native teacher, and the truth interpreted by native experience, and the instructions and exhortations of the preacher spring out of the native heart in a simple and natural way, free from officialism, and not associated with the expectations of worldly benefits, which are almost inevitably identified in the mind of the natives with the services of the foreign agent. It will be an immense saving in money, time, and labor to select men on

the ground from among the people, knowing the language, familiar with the native character and customs and modes of life, ready to mingle with men on the same social level and deal with them at close quarters, able to adjust instruction to the idiosyncrasies of the native mind, and avail themselves of the power which is often wrapped up in a native idiom or hidden away in some tone or gesture or shrug of the shoulder or familiar illustration.

This policy above outlined is already the generally accepted one in our missions with useful results ; but it needs emphasizing, just at the present time, as *par excellence* the policy especially indicated by Providence and taught by experience as the one which should be adopted and systematically carried out as a permanent method of conducting the work. Suitable arrangements should be made in every field for the prolonged, thorough, and systematic training of native helpers. No one from among the natives should be selected for this service who does not give satisfactory evidence of true piety and spiritual aims in the Lord's work.

There seems to be practical unanimity among experienced missionaries upon two

points with reference to the training which is desirable : First, it should be given on the field, and, second, it should be largely, although not exclusively, in the vernacular of the country. With reference to the desirability of conducting the training of native helpers in their native lands, there is apparently a consensus of missionary opinion ; and it becomes us to be wise and cautious, and to walk by the light of experience in a matter so vital as this. A capital mistake may be made just here in giving unwise encouragement to natives to seek an education in America or England, as a preparation for evangelistic service in their native lands. It is a far wiser and more hopeful method of securing the usefulness of native agents to provide for regular, thorough, systematic training in the fields, and to insist upon their obtaining it there. It is only exceptional natives of the highest moral calibre and finest spiritual fibre, who have been plainly called of God to a front rank in His service, and who have been tested and found true, who will profit by a course of American training. The vast majority of Asiatics would never survive it and retain the requisites of a successful ministry among their fellow-countrymen. We would not,

of course, contend that this must necessarily be so in every individual case ; but it may safely be said that not one in a hundred of the natives at present engaged in foreign fields could be wisely selected to stand this test. It is more likely; however, if this matter is not watched, that ninety-nine out of every hundred would seek their educational and ecclesiastical fortune in these favored lands, toward which many of them are already longingly looking, and hoping that the door may be thrown open for them to come. The other point upon which the weight of missionary opinion seems to be in one direction is that, as a general rule, the vernacular should be the medium through which this training should be imparted, especially in all that relates to biblical education and religious instruction. In many missions, however, an exception has been made in cases where an advanced academical training and a more thorough theological course is called for ; in which case it seems to be the universal custom in mission fields to make the English language the medium of this advanced curriculum.

There are three points which must be guarded with special care in this process of training the native agent : first, he must

not be educated above or away from the humble duties of the native ministry ; second, he must not be denationalized in the process, so that this higher education will separate him from his countrymen ; third, he must not be spoiled in the spirit and tone of his service by an unwise use of foreign money. He must be a native still, and whatever robs him of his native quality is likely to be a detraction from his power. While his character must be changed and elevated, his nationality must be untouched ; while his service should be properly rewarded it should be still a service of love and not of hire. Proper pay will not spoil a proper man, while any pay will be too much for an unworthy man.

If proper regard is paid to the considerations just noted, which are lessons of experience in the practical workings of our missions, we may safely urge an expansive and vigorous policy in all our fields in training and bringing forward a native agency. Missionaries should be set apart for this special service of educating and training a corps of native assistants ; buildings should be provided with full apparatus and every desirable facility ; a graded system of instruction should be adopted for different



classes of helpers ; a thorough training in the Bible and careful instruction in practical piety should be the first consideration ; then provision should be made for a broad and general academical education in the case of those who are candidates for teachers and preachers ; practical drill should be given in methods of evangelistic and pastoral work ; candidates for the native pastorate should receive a special course of theological instruction, with particular reference to the errors and sophistries of the religious systems they will have to contend with, so that they will be in a sense specialists in the defence and advocacy of the Gospel as the wisdom of God, in opposition to those phascs of superstition and human device in religion which rule the minds of men around them. Our mission boards should regard this plan of operation as settled, and consider this department of mission activity as sacred and invaluable, and give it the financial support it needs. Our churches should be ready to give generously to this specific branch of foreign mission service. The personality of our missionaries will, perhaps, of necessity, continue to be the most prominent point of contact between the churches at home and the work abroad ; yet it would

be well if our churches could become more conscious of, and more directly interested in, the native element of our mission fields, and realize more fully that our great dependence for permanent results and steady advance in this work is on the native rather than the foreign agent.

When the foreign mission work which we have carried on shall crystallize into native Christian churches and institutions, and become a fountain of further missionary enterprise to the regions beyond, it will not be possible to continue to introduce the foreign missionary into this enlarged sphere of effort. Native missionaries of native churches must then have their innings ; and why should we not have confidence that God is going to use His people, in what are now mission lands, as the chief agents in the general extension of His kingdom to the myriad souls in the as yet obscure and untouched villages and hamlets of Asia and Africa ? Has He not called our Christian churches, within the lifetime of many still among us, out of a state of almost utter neglect of this great duty, to participate in the honors of the modern missionary enterprise ? Does He intend, do you think, to limit the sacred privileges of this co-opera-

tion with Him in the crowning work of redemption to the churches now within the bounds of modern Christendom? Were not His first missionaries Asiatics? Did He not call Saul from consenting to the martyrdom of Stephen, to be Paul, the missionary to the Gentiles? Let us not be distrustful of His power or doubt the meaning of His purpose. It seems clearly beyond the scope, as it is probably beyond the liberality and zeal, of our Christian churches of Western lands, to carry on with foreign agents and foreign money this grand work of world-wide redemption to its completion. Other churches of other lands must have a share; and the Christianity of all lands to the end of time must be missionary in aim and life in order to its highest development and its truest spirituality. Is the native constituency of our missionary fields to be forever receiving gifts, with no sense themselves of the duty of giving to others around and beyond them of the spiritual benefits which God has sent them so freely, from the loving hearts and unselfish hands of His people in Western lands? If so, then the Christianity of our foreign mission fields is to be the darkest and saddest failure of these ages of wilderness life to the Church

of Christ. It will be the most melancholy exhibition the world has yet seen of the selfishness of the human heart and its capacity to resist the appeal and ministry of disinterested love. The coldness and indifference of the average Christianity of civilized lands must be shocking to heavenly sensibilities, but the failure to respond with grateful and loyal missionary service on the part of churches in foreign lands, which have been both redeemed by the Cross of Calvary and evangelized by the messengers of love from distant and unknown disciples of the same Lord who died for them, will be a still more strange and startling evidence of the stolidity and selfishness of the human heart.

Let us not, however, be disturbed by any undue distrust of the power of the Gospel to win its victories. We shall yet see the triumphs of love in our missionary churches. Already a band of not less than one hundred and sixty evangelists have gone forth from the Christian churches of the South Pacific Islands to carry the message of salvation to other benighted tribes. There are at the present hour sixty-eight native missionaries in New Guinea from the Samoan Islands, concerning whom one of the resident missionaries of the London Missionary Society

recently gave this remarkable testimony : “ Our South Sea Island teachers are our mainstay, and no pen can write the grand work they have done.” Here is actual foreign missionary work, where less than a century ago the grossest darkness and superstition prevailed. At a recent meeting of the Malagasy Congregational Union, a native organization among mission churches of the London Missionary Society in Madagascar—a gathering representative of eight hundred churches of the Province of Imerina, held at Antananarivo, the capital of the island—was recently witnessed the novel spectacle of “ returned missionaries” of the native churches appearing on the platform and giving accounts of their labors and of the strange customs of the tribes among whom they had been residing. A thousand dollars a year are subscribed by the natives themselves for the support of these native missionaries. At the recent Annual Missionary Meeting of the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland, Rev. Dr. Laws, of Livingstonia, reported that “ during the past year they had had from thirty to forty of their native Christians going out, Sunday after Sunday, to preach the Gospel, some of these men walking eight

or ten miles for the purpose in a broiling sun. In this way, in 1891, they had had from twenty-five to thirty services conducted every Lord's Day by these Christians themselves in connection with one station of their mission." Another speaker at the same meeting, the Rev. James Luke, of Old Calabar, stated that "they were breaking new ground in that field by the extension of native agencies. All their up-river stations were occupied by native agents, and now instead of one tribe just waiting to spring at the throat of the other, they were sending Christian men of one tribe in among the heathen men of another tribe to bless them and to do them good." These are specimen facts fresh from the fields, and are prophetic of a coming era of missionary achievement in our foreign mission churches.

There is hardly a mission report of our great societies for the past year which does not emphasize the call for more laborers, and the funds to support them; while in several of these societies a "forward movement" of large proportions is fully determined upon. This purpose on the part of our churches to increase the number of foreign missionaries is in the line of highest duty, and yet even though the Reformed

churches represented by this Alliance should send a thousand new missionaries to the foreign fields this coming year, our appeal for a systematic and enlarged outlay for the increase of native agents would still hold in all its force. The service done by these new missionaries would soon make the call for native assistants to take up and carry on the growing, expanding work louder and more imperative than ever. The Church can never complete this majestic enterprise by foreign agents, even were she inclined to largely increase their number. The only result would be to greatly enlarge the area of the native agent and multiply the demands for his services. The Church is far behind her opportunities and lags sadly in her duty, even in the supply of missionaries from home ; this scanty supply of foreign laborers, however, in no way relieves the urgency of the call for native agents, but rather intensifies it. If we cannot have the foreign missionary, we must have the native missionary.











